

# GF-TADs

GLOBAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE  
PROGRESSIVE CONTROL OF  
TRANSBOUNDARY ANIMAL DISEASES



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



**Standing Group of Experts on ASF in Europe**  
under the GF-TADs umbrella

**14<sup>th</sup> meeting (SGE ASF14)**

**Sofia, 10 and 11 September 2019**

## **GF-TADs Expert Mission on ASF in Belgium**

***Alexey Igolkin (ARRIAH)***

# Terms of Reference

1. The experts should perform on the spot visits (as detailed in the Annex) in order to gather data and be in a position to formulate recommendations on disease management.
2. The experts should work with the Veterinary Services in order to determine the following aspects:
  - a. If African swine fever (ASF) is occurring in domestic pigs (both in commercial sector and the so called back yard sector) and extent of the areas of occurrence.
  - b. If ASF is occurring in wild boar and geographical distribution of ASF in wild boar.
  - c. Formulate hypothesis on the drivers of ASF occurrence.
3. Propose measures intended for the control and eradication of ASF under local conditions, in line with the OIE International Standards and the Recommendations formulated by the GF-TADs SGE on ASF.
4. The experts should report to the Standing Group of Experts on African swine fever in Europe under the OIE/FAO GF-TADs and to the Veterinary Services of the country being visited. A written report should be produced for each mission.



# Expert Mission on ASF in Belgium

**Period of the mission:** 16-19 June 2019

**GF TADs team:**

- *Krzysztof Jajdzewski (team leader, PL)*
- *Ago Partel (EE)*
- *Alexey Igolkin (RU).*

**Places visited during the mission:**

- *Central Veterinary Office (FASFC) in Brussels.*
- *Flanders Region. LCU Office in Gent.*
- *2 farms. One large, one small free range.*
- *Walloon Region. Virton, ASF infected region*



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# Distribution of powers in Belgium

## Federal .be



- Food chain safety
- Agriculture - Sanitary (Domestic animal health etc.)
- Exports (sanitary aspects - SPS)
- EU and third country relations
- CVO - OIE delegates

## Rregions



RÉGION DE BRUXELLES-CAPITALE  
BRUSSELS HOOFDSTEDELIJK GEWEST



- Management of **wild fauna, including animal health**
- Hunting, Nature and Forests, Tourism
- Agriculture - Other than sanitary (Economy etc.)
- Animal welfare

## Laboratory system:

- National Reference Laboratory
- Regional Laboratories for northern and southern Belgium.



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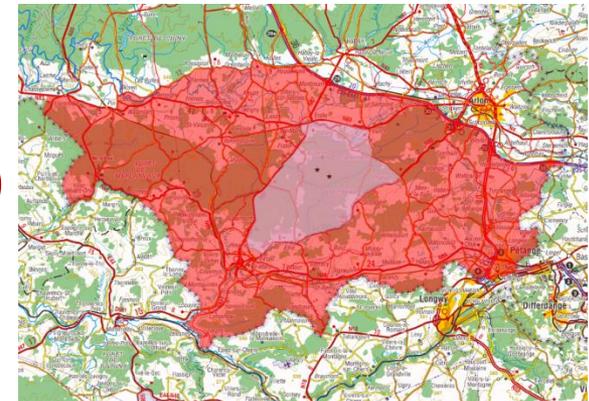
# Chronology

- ✓ 9/09/2018: 3 adult boars found dead in the town of Etalle
- ✓ 10/09: sick young boar shot in the town of Etalle

**"Passive surveillance"**

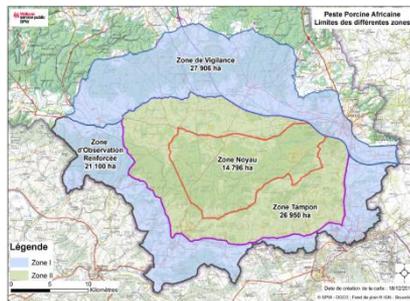
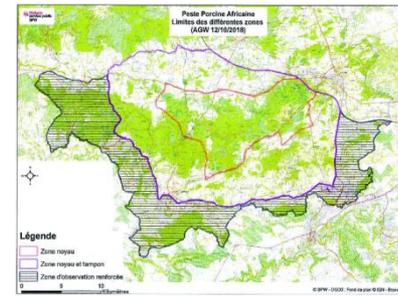
=> Wild fauna surveillance service – LAB

- ✓ 12/09 in the evening
  - Info by LNR (Sciensano) to CVO, FAFSC and Region: PCR PPA positive => confirmation tests scheduled for the next day
  - Internal info, Ministers, EU Commission, neighbouring countries etc.
- ✓ 13/09 at 9.30 a.m.: crisis meeting of FAFSC-Region, in touch with the EU Commission and Ministers
  - => Delineation of **"infected zone"** (63,000 hectares ***(Provisional => 30/11/18 + Formalised by EU Decision)***)
- ✓ 13/09 at 4 p.m.: Confirmation by Sciensano



# Chronology

- ✓ **26/09 - 03/10/18: culling of all domestic pigs in the initial infected zone**
- ✓ 12/10/18: delineation by the Walloon Region of 3 "operational" zones within the infected zone, with a view to the management of wild boars:
  - kernel zone
  - buffer zone
  - reinforced observation zone
- ✓ 23/11/18: **Adaptation European zoning**
  - Delineation of **zone I (buffer) and zone II (infected)**
  - Region: delineation of a vigilance zone

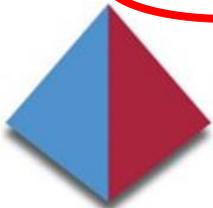
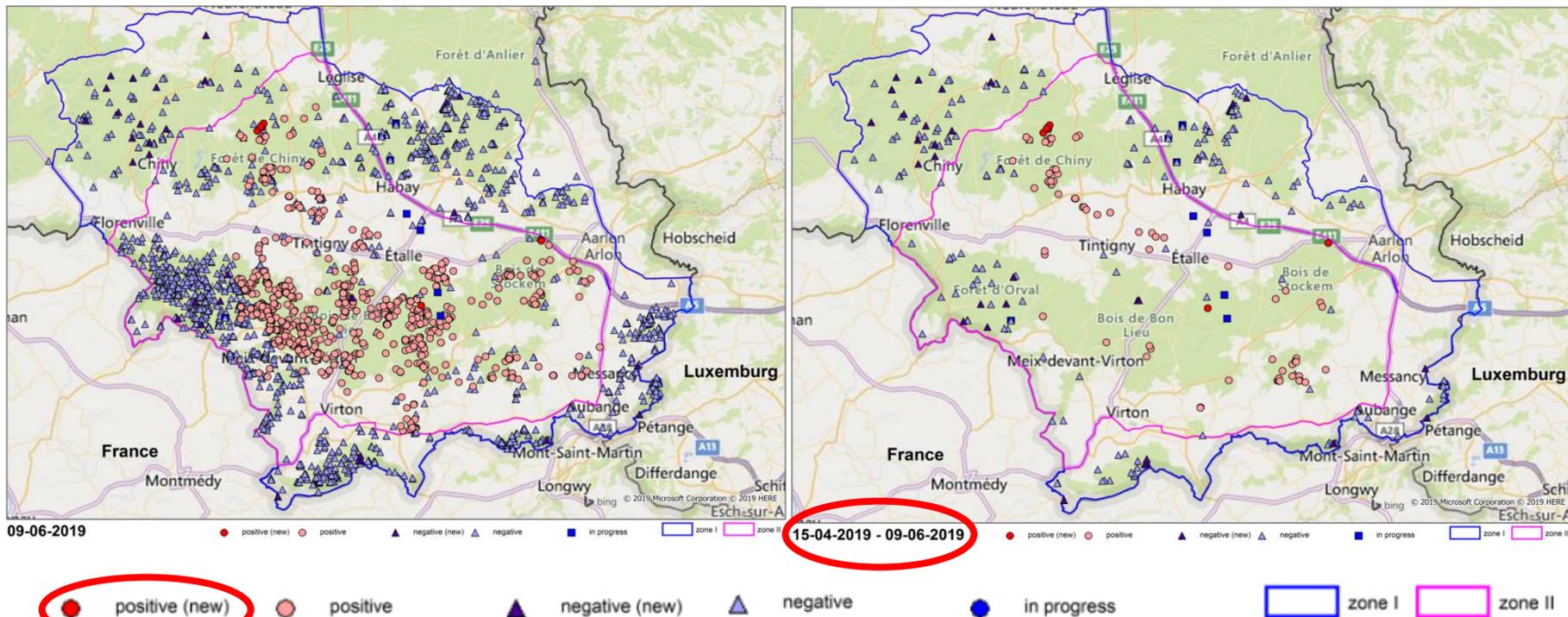


# Current situation of ASF in Belgium

- Different evolution in the different sub-zones
  - centre and east: transition in endemic situation
  - West-north: later active circulation with virus at the level of the fencing installed in October (West), trend to also be endemic

*Total 13/09/2018 – 09/06/2019*

*Last 2 months*

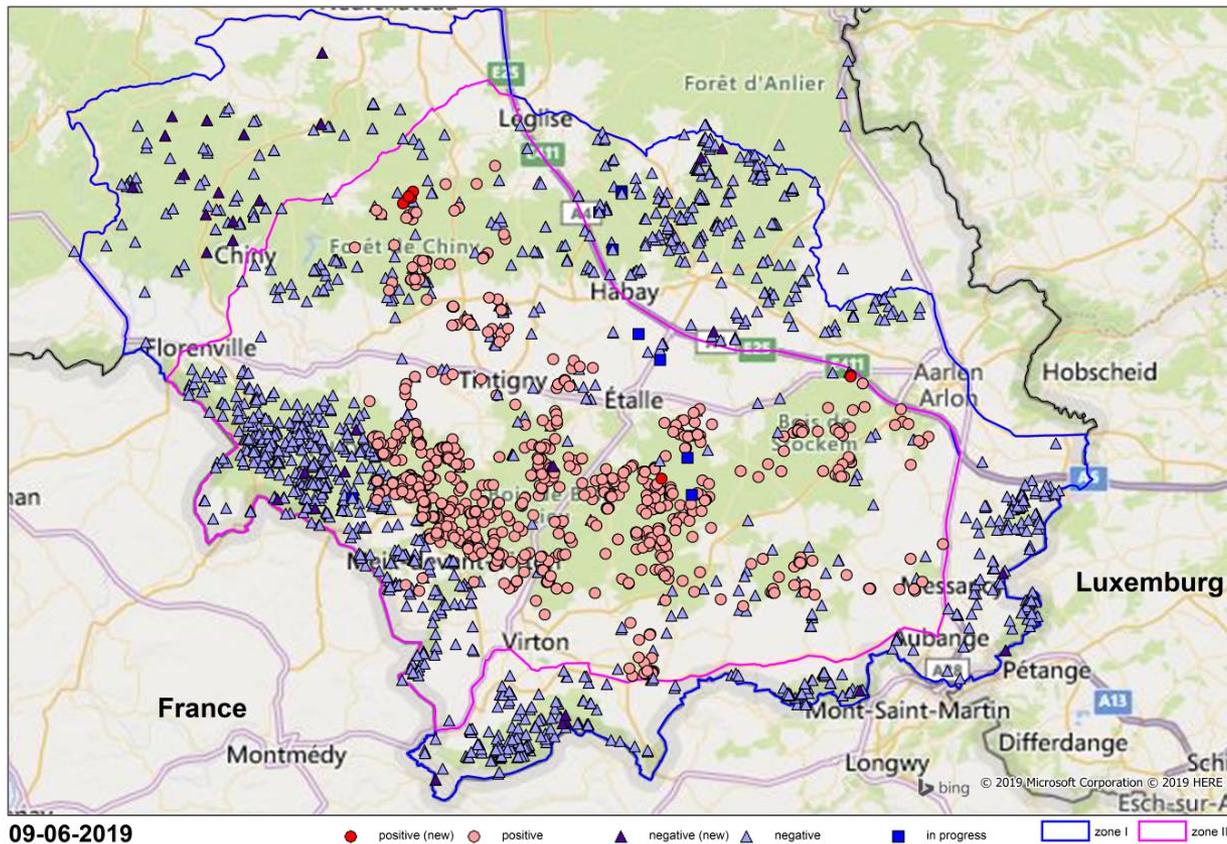


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# Current situation of ASF in Belgium

As at 13/06/2019 (WB, Walloon Region)

- 3080 wild boars found dead or shot were tested and analysed
  - 2910 in the Zone I & II [738 Culled (6+), 624 trapped (3+), 115 night shots (2+)]
  - 823 positive, all in zone II.

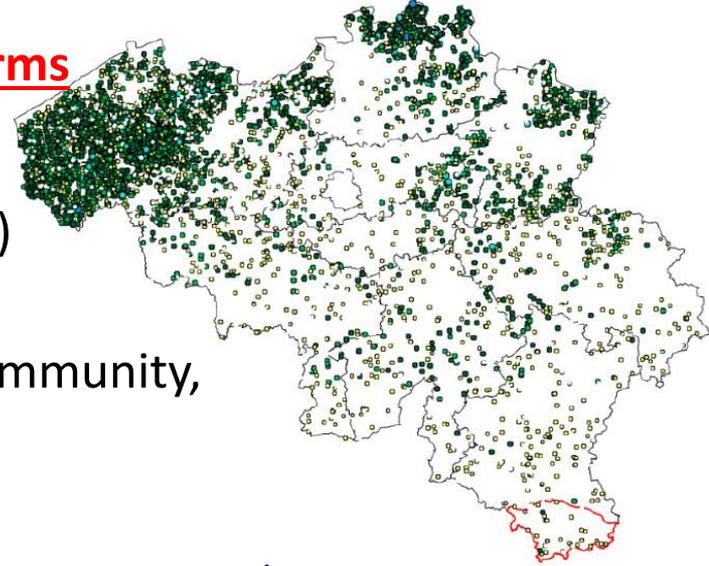


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# Number of DP populations

**NB: At all times: Mandatory registration of all pig farms**

- Number of pig farms in Belgium:  $\pm 7,200$
- Number of pigs in BE: 6.2 million (94% in Flanders)
- Number of pigs slaughtered per year: 11 million
- Turnover from exports: €1.3 billion (~ 90% intracommunity, 10% to third countries)
- Direct jobs: 15,000



**Domestic pigs:** > 5500 analyses ( $\pm 1200$  holdings) , all negative/compliant

## **No ASF cases in domestic pigs**

### **In the initial infected zone (before general culling)**

67 farms

$\pm 5,000$  pigs

The majority of these farms are individual owners raising pigs perfectly legally for their private use, and owning fewer than 10 pigs.



# Visit to the local branch of the LCU in Gent

LCU – Governmental, Local Control Unit for East Flanders.

## The LCU develops:

- sampling plans including No and kind of samples, type of production,
- technical sheets, including the guide how to take a samples and how to protect them during the trip to laboratory,
- standard reports of sampling.

All monitoring data for pigs and feral pigs are collected ad hoc from the private veterinarians ordering the testing and from the laboratories.

Additionally, the regional laboratory provides weekly information about the epidemiological situation to all private practitioners who have contracts with farms. This is done via e-mail and information on the website of the FASFC headquarters.



# Visit to a pig farm

- A farm with a full production cycle. 200 sows and production of about 6000 fattening pigs per year
- Fattening up to 110 kg.
- Dead animals are moved to a refrigerated container located the outside of the farm. Within 24h notification of falls is reported and 1-2 times per week collection of carcasses is carried out.
- Visits by a private veterinarians, who already takes care of the herd for 15 years, are performed every 2 months.
- Blood samples are taken for testing every 3 months or so. (in 2019, 90 blood samples were taken and 5 samples were taken from those who died in the PRRS direction. **No samples were taken for the ASF yet.**)
- The owner had a good knowledge of the ASF risk in Belgium and of the symptoms and prophylaxis there of. He also had knowledge of the presence of feral pigs in the area surrounding the holding.



# Visit to a small, commercial free range pig holding

- The farm is located in Wallonia, in an area outside of any zones
- 10 sows kept in a fenced area approximately 150 m from the farm premises.
- The meat is collected from the slaughterhouse by the owners and sold together with the products in their own shop or through deliveries to customers from different parts of the country.
- Disinfection of the vehicle transporting pigs to the slaughterhouse before loading is carried out by the owners of the farm themselves.
- The veterinarian visits the farm every 3-4 months.
- Samples are taken for Aujeszky's disease and Salmonella.

**So far, there have been NO tests for ASF.**

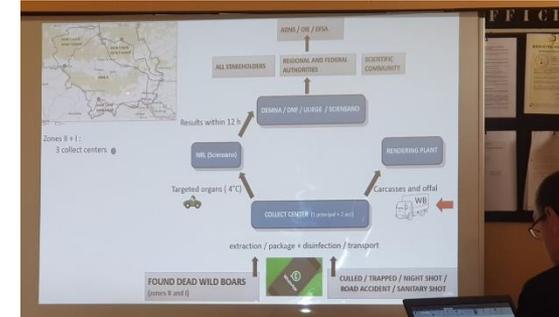
- The owners have not had a visit from an LCU veterinarian in recent years.



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# Visit to Walloon Region

- search and disposal carcasses WB,
- fences,
- traps,
- WB population management



Categories of WB carcasses ASFV positive - Post mortem interval (PMI)

Shot :	category 0 : sanitary shot / culled / trapped / night shot
Found dead* :	category 1 : complete carcass / with rigor mortis / small +
	category 2 : complete carcass / without rigor mortis / small + / ++
	category 3 : dismembered / with or without organs / small + / ++
	category 4 : bones + skin / small + / ++
	category 5 : only bones / no small
Found dead* :	cat 1 to 5 - with different levels of scavenging

**Insect activity is not taken into account now – project will start in July**

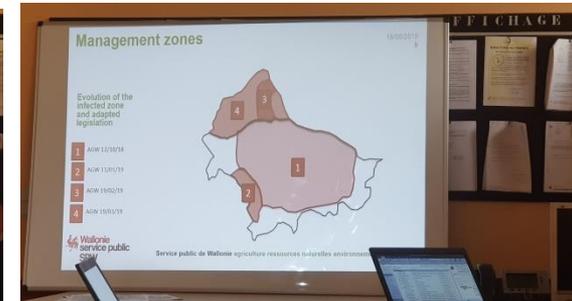
Rate of decomposition related to:

- environment : temperature / moisture / scavenger activity / insect activity
- animal : body condition / disposition of the body (water) / cause of death



ZONES II et I : INFECTED ZONE / REINFORCED OBS ZONE / VIGILANCE ZONE			
- found dead	packed*, all analysed**	→	rendering plant*
- culled in ZI and ZOR	packed*, all analysed**	→	rendering plant*
- culled in ZV	no packed, % analysed; 2 other centers	→	rendering plant*
OUTSIDE ZONES II et I (the rest of Wallonia)			
- found dead	packed, all analysed**	→	rendering plant*
- hunted	no packed, no analysis	→	game handling establishment

\* Packed wild boars: according to Biosécurité Procédure (séances de formation pour les chasseurs et agents DMP)  
 \*\* Histological analysis: Ref Lab Sciensano (ASFV gPCR), B - 1180 UCCLE  
 \* Carcasses and offal removal to the rendering plant: Ref:dec. B-9470/2018/LEELM



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# Search and disposal carcasses WB

- 1) The procedure for collecting fallen feral pigs consists of prospection, extraction, packaging, disinfection and transport by persons from Civil Protection.
- 2) Once a week dead wild boars are searched by the groups of 4-8 people..
- 3) When a dead boar is found, it is described in detail with GPS coordinates, location, terrain characteristics and the state of decomposition according to the scale from 1 to 5 are recorded.
- 4) The searched territorial sectors are marked on maps and sent with detailed data to the regional coordinator for evaluation.

Since October 2018 all carcasses, including those shot are transported to the special collection centre in Virton (*the autopsies, sampling and documentation are carried out*)

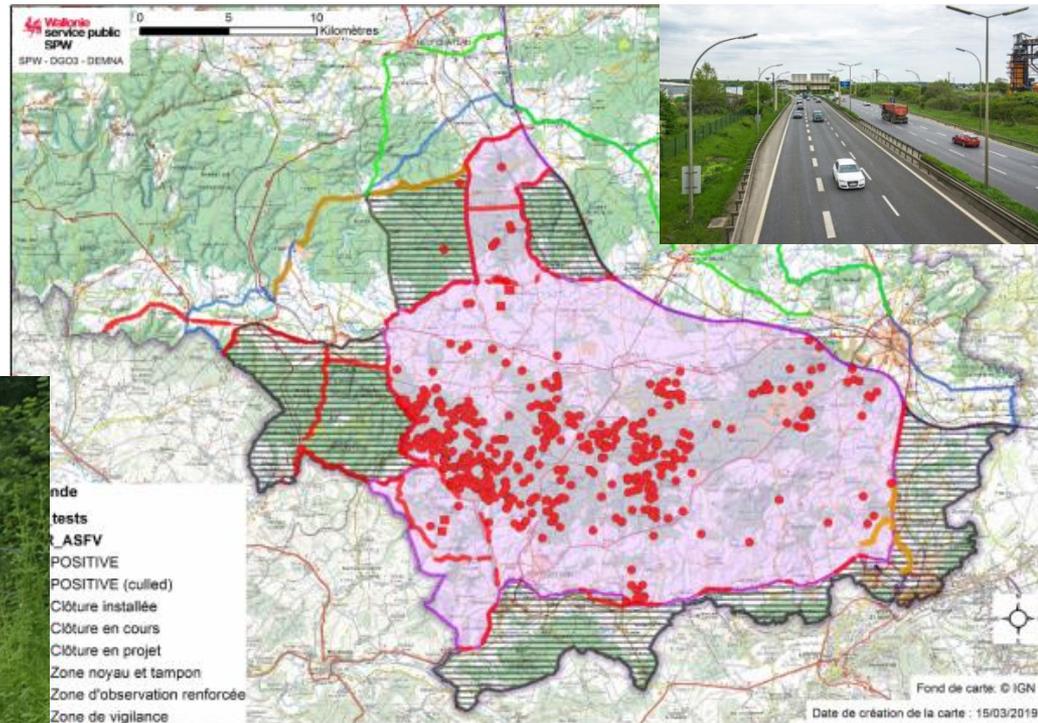


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# Fences

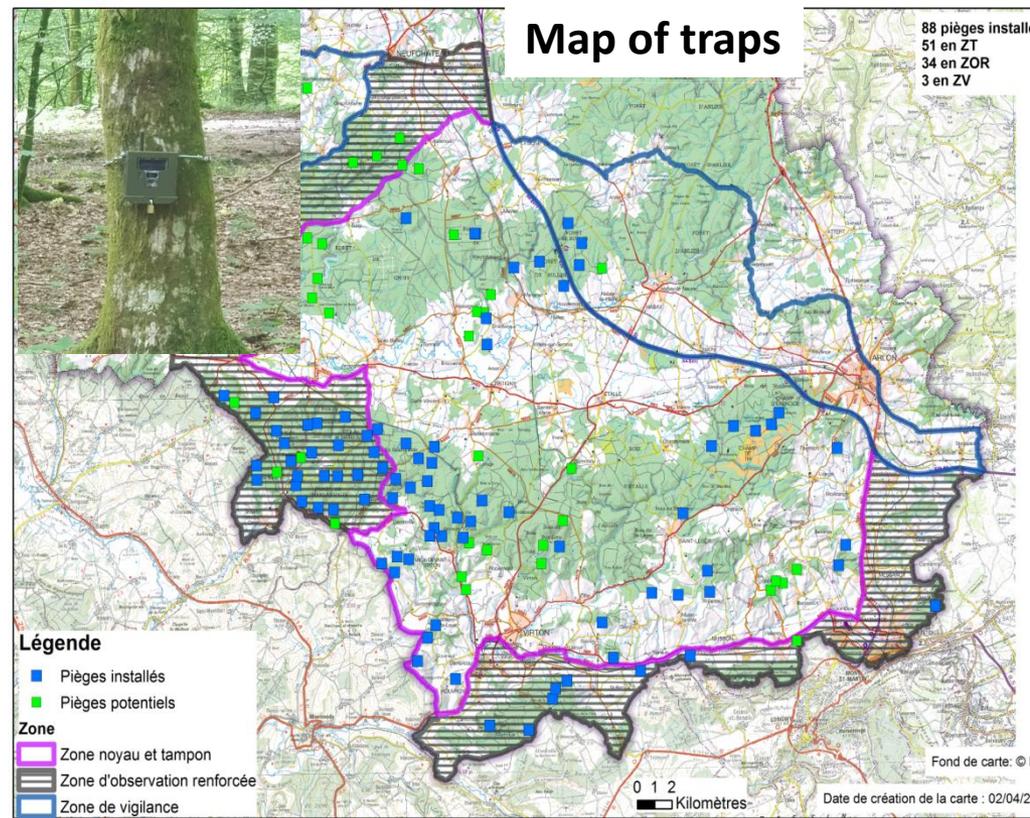
- The extensive system of fences are implemented to control of the disease.
- Fences can be constructed from 2-5 km per day.
- Monitoring of technical condition of fences is done daily.
- Fences are built in several rows at a distance of about 10 km from each other.
- Fences of the second and even third order are located in such a way that they form closed sectors (areas) for wild boars.

**According to the veterinary authorities of Wallonia, the fence greatly slows down the progression of the disease.**



# Traps

- An additional element reducing the wild boar population is the construction of traps.
- Currently, there are about 150 traps in operation especially around the infected zone.



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# WB population management

WB population management in Wallonia is in the hands of local hunting associations.

- In March 2018 the National Task Force was established.

*(Since March 2018, several 5 conferences (total of 500 people ) have been organised for hunters and veterinarians, including those from Luxembourg)*

- The results of laboratory tests of WB samples are available in a very short time, i.e. 12 hours *(PCR is standard method for all samples)*.

- Outside the infected area a group of 15 veterinarians was organized to take samples from feral pigs. *By mid-June 2019, 171 feral pigs were tested outside the zones. All with negative results.*

- In infected zone hunters get 100 EU for packaging a shot wild boar, which is then transported to a collecting centre as well as found dead WB.

*No financial incentives for shooting a wild boar are foreseen yet.*

- There are groups of forest rangers for night shootings.

**The current infected zone designated by the Wallonian authorities is about 630 km<sup>2</sup>**



# Conclusions

- 1) In accordance with statutory responsibilities, both risk assessment and risk management are carried out at central level and implemented by LCU.
- 2) Studies on strengthening farm biosecurity requirements in order to mitigate a risk of virus introduction are carried out at the central level all the time.
- 3) Discussions with both LCU representatives and the owner of the pig farm indicated a general knowledge of the disease and biosecurity rules. In addition, a large part of the information is available on the Agency's website.
- 4) The visited LCU have both a budget and adequate resources of official veterinarians to deal with an outbreak under their responsibility.
- 5) ASF preparedness planning procedures are currently under evaluation and being improved. In relation to the above mentioned work, no additional simulation exercises have been organised at LCU level in recent time.



# Conclusions

- 6) The system is based on close cooperation between the farm owners and the veterinarians in charge of the herd health care. In this context, the supervision does not require increased involvement of the LCU official veterinarians.
- 7) The chain of command and reaction in the case of an outbreak is based on the information provided by central level.
- 8) The pig owners visited were aware of the risk and biosecurity rules. They were well motivated to protect their herds from the disease. They mainly learned about the requirements from official website of AFSCA.
- 9) The pig owners visited were aware of the risk and biosecurity rules. They were well motivated to protect their herds from the disease. They mainly learned about the requirements from official website of AFSCA.
- 10) The cooperation between LCU in northern part of Belgium with environmental and hunting organisations is only on very basic level.



# Conclusions

- 11) In southern part of Belgium the ASF control activities for the wild boar population in the infected area and in a significant part of the territory surrounding the ASF site are carried out in a professional, considered and committed manner, involving all possible institutional and personal resources. The significant improvement of the collaboration between officials and hunters has been observed by the team since last visit.
- 12) There are few hypothesis concerning the introduction of the virus to Belgian territory. The probable causes are from the disposal in the wild environment of the illegally brought food for personal use from infected countries to illegally imported wild boar for hunting purposes. However, the investigation is on going.



# Recommendations

- ✓ The Belgian CA is recommended to encourage the LCU in Flanders Region for increased activities concerning preparedness for potential ASF occurrence in the region, including gathering and evaluating of husbandry data, the requirements of some EU provisions establishing the rules for zoning and movement of pigs and products in case ASF outbreaks eg CID 2014/709.
- ✓ The team suggests to organize at LCU level simulation exercise for ASF which can help to find potential problems in organisation of eradication of disease.
- ✓ A review of the biosecurity status of pig farms across the country would help to assess the overall protection of the pig sector against the risk of ASF virus spreading to farms.
- ✓ The team encourages regional level of AFSCA in the north of Belgium to initiate closer collaboration with stakeholders involved in wild animal management to review and upgrade the wild boar strategy.



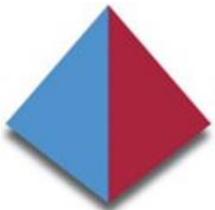
# Main recommendations

- ✓ The team recommends the Belgian CA to enhance the passive surveillance on the farm level taking into account the size of farm, age group of animals, the epidemiological situation in the region etc.
- ✓ The only suggestion from the visiting team concerning ASF wild boar management in the southern part of Belgium is to evaluate the possibilities to establish additional incentives for hunters involved in depopulation strategy.



# Final remark

- The working atmosphere during the mission was very positive.
- The Belgian Veterinary Authority gave all their support and assistance to facilitate the mission.
- The Team wishes to thank the interpreters for their support.



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**THANK YOU !**



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